

What is claimed is:

1. A drive control apparatus for a vehicle comprising:
  - an object detecting device for detecting objects in front of the vehicle, which is
  - 5 installed in the vehicle;
  - a running track calculation device for calculating a running track along which the vehicle runs;
  - a preceding vehicle detecting device for detecting a preceding vehicle which the vehicle is to follow among the objects depending on signals output from the object
  - 10 detecting device and from the running track calculation device;
  - a vehicle control device for controlling a speed of the vehicle so that the vehicle runs following the preceding vehicle;
  - a preceding vehicle information output device for informing a driver of the vehicle of information about the preceding vehicle obtained by the object detecting
  - 15 device; and
  - a control mode selecting device for selecting one of a first control mode in which the vehicle control device is allowed to execute a follow-up control operation, and the preceding vehicle information output device is allowed to output information about the preceding vehicle, and a second control mode in which the vehicle control device is
  - 20 not allowed to execute a follow-up control operation, and the preceding vehicle information output device is allowed to output information about the preceding vehicle.
2. A drive control apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a visibility determining device for determining a degree of forward visibility of the vehicle;
- 25 wherein the control mode selecting device selects the second control mode when

the degree of visibility determined by the visibility determining device is less than or equal to a predetermined threshold.

3. A drive control apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a visibility  
5 determining device for determining a degree of forward visibility of the vehicle;

wherein the control mode selecting device selects the first control mode when the degree of visibility determined by the visibility determining device is greater than a predetermined threshold.

10 4. A drive control apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising a warning device for sending a warning to the driver when the degree of visibility determined by the visibility determining device is reduced.

5. A drive control apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising a warning  
15 device for sending a warning to the driver when the degree of visibility determined by the visibility determining device is reduced.

6. A drive control apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the visibility  
determining device comprises an image capturing device for capturing image of a  
20 forward view of the vehicle.

7. A drive control apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the visibility  
determining device comprises an image capturing device for capturing image of a  
forward view of the vehicle.

8. A drive control apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a switching signal sending device for outputting a switching signal by being operated by the driver;

wherein the control mode selecting device switches the control modes from one to the other depending on the switching signal output from the switching signal

5 outputting device.